

Perceived Leadership Life Skills Developed Through Participation at the Arkansas FFA
Leadership Conference: A Program Evaluation

Dr. Chelsey Ann Ahrens
Texas Tech University

Mrs. Casandra Kay Cox
Instructor
University of Arkansas
Department of Agricultural Education, Communication and Technology
205 Agriculture Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Dr. Scott Burris
Associate Professor
Texas Tech University
Department of Agricultural Education & Communications
Box 42131
Lubbock, TX 79409

Mollie Dykes
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation

Abstract

Youth leadership life skills are the “development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life” (Miller, 1976, p.2). A model developed by Kapostasy indicates life skills should be taught through FFA (Staller, 2001). Thus, it is important to evaluate youth leadership life skills developed to determine the effectiveness of leadership curriculum and its quality and impact. This research study surveyed Arkansas FFA members after attending the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference to determine the leadership life skills developed while at the conference. Furthermore, this study looked at relationships between FFA participants and FFA participation with youth leadership life skills and provides recommendations for future research and for practitioners.

Introduction/Conceptual Framework

Youth leadership life skills development (YLLSD) is a necessary tenant of youth leadership programs. Miller (1976) defined youth leadership life skills (YLLS) as the “development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life” (p. 2). FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America) involves students in leadership development activities, education, and experiences. However, Arkansas lacks data regarding FFA impact on FFA participants’ leadership life skills. FFA programs utilize state conferences, camps and trainings, completion of supervised agricultural experience programs (SAE), holding offices at local and state levels, committee work, competitive events and state and national trips to develop

leadership competencies in members (Dormondy & Seevers, Rutherford, Townsend, Briers, Cummins, & Conrad, 2002; Townsend & Carter, 1983; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997).

FFA in Arkansas

When FFA camps were being established in the late 1920s and early 1930s, they included recreational, social, and leadership activities. Leadership development is the central focus at modern FFA camps in most states (Connors, Falk, & Epps, 2010). Arkansas was the second state chartered by the National FFA Organization in 1928 and maintains a permanent FFA camp still today.

When the FFA camp was first established, a main component was “to teach boys how to organize and accept group responsibility under new and difficult conditions” (Smith, 1933, p. 46). Today, the camp is organized “to promote personal growth and enhance leadership skills” (Arkansas FFA Association, 2012b). The Arkansas Leadership Conference is a four-day conference where members participate in large and small group sessions, personal growth reflection sessions, team challenges, a service project and a banquet. Until 2011, only two weeks of Arkansas Leadership Conferences were offered, each consisting of four days of sessions. The conference was increased to three weeks of four-day sessions to accommodate the growing number of attendees. The 2012 theme was I Believe, and participants learned how to be agricultural advocates and positively promote the agriculture industry. Arkansas Leadership Conference curriculum is developed by non-Arkansas FFA staff and facilitated by current state officers and staff. The conference provides networking opportunities for Arkansas FFA members in addition to leadership skills. During the three weeks of the 2012 conference, 413 members representing 55 chapters attended, of which 44.8% of attendees were male and 55.2% were female (Arkansas FFA Association, 2012a).

FFA and the Classroom

Agricultural education is built on a three-circle integrated model: instruction, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and FFA (see Figure 1). Instruction is provided in a contextual learning environment through classroom and laboratory instruction. In addition, SAE projects provide an opportunity for students to have a work-based learning experience. Finally, FFA serves as the student leadership organization where agricultural education students can be involved (National FFA Organization, 2012a). The 2001 Director of Business and Information Services at the National FFA was Tom Kapostasy (Staller, 2001). Kapostasy developed a model to better understand the roles of classroom, SAE, and FFA in accordance with knowledge and life skills. From this model (see Figure 2), the darker the shaded area the more important the “what” and “how” instructors teach agricultural education. Life Skills and FFA have the darkest shaded box meaning that students can learn life skills more intensely through FFA participation than classroom/laboratory instruction or SAE projects.

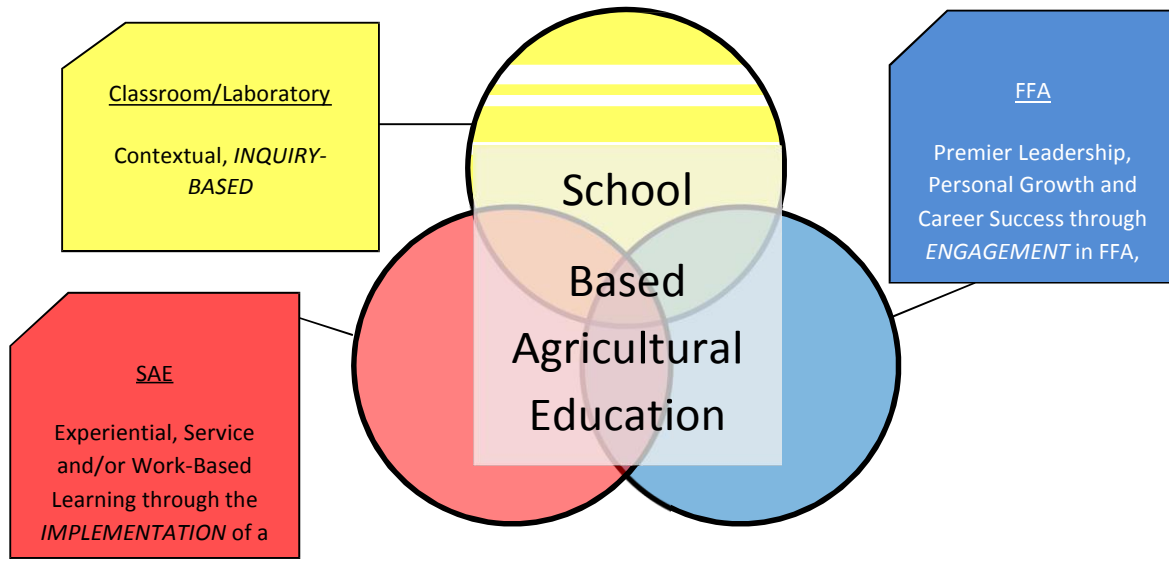


Figure 1. Adapted from “The 3-Component Model Revision.” National FFA Organization.

What We Teach

		Knowlege			Life Skills
		Academic	Technical	Career	
How We Teach	Classroom/Laboratory				
	SAE				
	FFA				

Figure 2. Adapted from “What in the World Does Integral Mean Anyway? Is FFA Optional?” by B. Staller, 2001, February/March, *NAAE News & Views*, XLIII (3), p. 3. Note: The darker the shading, the more intense the strength of learning the “what” via the “how.”

An integral part of experiential youth leadership organizations, such as FFA, is leadership education (Real & Harlin, 2006). The National FFA Organization’s motto “is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education” (National FFA Organization, 2012d, para. 1). Furthermore, in order to accomplish this mission, the National FFA Organization plans to “develop competent and assertive agricultural leadership; strengthen the confidence of agriculture students in themselves and their work; develop interpersonal skills in teamwork, communications, human relations and social interaction; and promote cooperation and cooperative attitudes among all people” (National FFA Organization, 2012d, para. 2).

Arkansas FFA strives to embody the mission of the National FFA Organization by developing leaders through the Arkansas Leadership Conference.

Youth Leadership Life Skills

Studies have shown that involvement in leadership activities had a positive relationship with youth leadership skill development (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Dormody & Seevers, 1994; Real & Harlin, 2006; Rutherford, et al., 2002; Seevers & Dormody, 1994; Townsend & Carter, 1983; Wigenbach & Kahler, 1997), that females have higher leadership life skills scores than males (Dormody & Seevers, 1994; Real & Harlin, 2006; Seevers & Dormody, 1994), and that there is no statistical difference in leadership life skills and age (Dormody & Seevers, 1994; Seevers & Dormody, 1994; Wigenbach & Kahler, 1997). However, few studies have determined if individual conferences aid in developing youth leadership life skills.

Not only can FFA help promote personal growth and enhance leadership skills, but participation in FFA activities has been found to help further collegiate experiences. Past FFA members are more likely to participate in collegiate clubs and organizations and hold officer positions as compared to their non-FFA member counterparts (Allen, Ricketts, & Priest, 2007; Park & Dyer, 2005; & Smith, Garton, & Kitchel, 2010).

Two studies have been conducted (Rutherford et al., 2002; Real & Harlin, 2006) to determine if a specific activity has impact on leadership life skill development. Rutherford et al. (2002) conducted a study to understand the leadership self-perceptions of Washington Leadership Conference (WLC) participants. Real and Harlin (2006) conducted a study to see if Texas youth who served as San Antonio Livestock Exposition school tour guides gained leadership life skills. Both studies utilized the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI) developed by Townsend and Carter (1983). However, no studies have been found utilizing the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) developed by Seevers, Dormody, & Clason (1995) to evaluate leadership life skills gained from a particular activity or conference.

Purpose and Objectives

The leadership life skills Arkansas FFA members develop from attending the Arkansas Leadership Conference have not been researched. On the same token, Arkansas FFA does not have relevant data to understand if FFA members do indeed gain the skills outlined in the FFA mission during the Arkansas Leadership Conference. Area I research priority II of the *Association of Leadership Educators* calls for programmatic assessment and evaluation of leadership education. Within this research priority, it was discussed that programmatic assessment will in turn “provide leadership educators with the potential to design intentional curriculum aimed at the development of Leadership Education learners (Andenoro et al., 2013, p. 7). In conjunction, Priority 5 of the *National Research Agenda: American Association for Agricultural Education’s Research Priority Areas for 2011-2015* emphasized the need for “accurate and reliable data that describe the quality and impact of educational programs” (Doerfert, 2011, p. 24). Additionally, Ricketts and Newcomb (1984) found leadership and personal development were relatively low in FFA members. So, it was recommended that “there needs to be a critical review of the instructional process in teaching leadership and personal development abilities” (p. 58). Likewise, it was also determined that there needs to be evaluations of programs to determine their successfulness (Newcomb & Ricketts, 1984). Hence,

it is important to evaluate conferences such as the Arkansas Leadership Conference to understand what participants are gaining and to ensure that what is gained aligns with conference learning objectives. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate Arkansas Leadership Conference participants and their perceived development of youth leadership life skills. The evaluation was guided by these objectives:

1. Describe the demographics of Arkansas FFA members at the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference.
2. Describe youth leadership life skill development of selected Arkansas FFA leaders.
3. Describe leadership participation in FFA of participants who attended the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference.
4. Describe Career Development Event (CDE) participation of FFA members who attended the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference.
5. Explore relationships between FFA participants and youth leadership life skill development.
6. Explore the relationship between FFA participation and youth leadership life skill development.

Methodology

Since this study was exploratory in nature, descriptive survey methodology and correlational design were used. A three section modified-researcher developed instrument was distributed to FFA members who attended the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference. The first section of the instrument, Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS), was developed by Seevers, Dormody, and Clason (1995). This is a 30-indicator, unidimensional instrument that uses a four-point sub-scale ranging from 0 = no gain to 3 = a lot of gain, and has yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.98. The researchers chose the YLLSDS as the dependent variable to be used as an evaluation tool to measure self-assessed scores of youth leadership skills gained through participation in the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference. The second and third sections of the instrument are researcher developed questions pertaining to involvement in FFA and demographics. This instrument was designed for Arkansas FFA Staff to evaluate self-perceived leadership life skills FFA members gained by attending the conference.

The instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts including five faculty members, two doctoral candidates, and one Arkansas FFA state staff member for face and content validity. Due to recommendations by the expert panel, minor revisions were made. A pilot test was then conducted to ensure reliability of the researcher modified instrument. A sample of 29 participants who attended the Texas Area I Leadership Camp completed the instrument. After discarding incomplete instruments, the final pilot group ($n = 18$) was tested for reliability using a Cronbach's alpha on the YLLSDS modified portion of the instrument and yielded an alpha of 0.954.

There were 413 registered participants at the three Arkansas Leadership Conference sessions. Three hundred twenty-eight surveys were completed, of which 290 instruments were

deemed usable ($n = 290$) resulting in a 70.22% response rate. During the conference, participants attended a reflection workshop where workshop presenters asked them to critically reflect upon their time at the Arkansas Leadership Conference. Participants completed the instrument as a component of the reflection workshop in which participants were asked about their YLLSD after attending the Arkansas Leadership Conference.

To achieve the objectives of this study, data were summarized using measures of central tendency and variability. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the participants in terms of demographic variables and to describe the samples' involvement in FFA. Frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations were reported. Next, correlations were used to understand if relationships existed between YLLS and demographic variables and YLLS and FFA involvement. The magnitude of the relationship was reported utilizing Davis' (1971) conventions. All calculations were calculated utilizing SPSS© version 20.

Results

Objective one sought to describe the demographics of participants of the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference (see Table 1). Of those who responded, when asked about gender ($n = 288$), 163 (56.2%) were female and 125 (43.1%) were male. When asked about ethnicity, ($n = 286$), most were white ($n = 270$, 93.1%) with 5 (1.7%) African Americans, 4 (1.4%) Other, 3 (1.0%) Native American, 2 (0.7%) Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2 (0.7%) Hispanic participants. The average length of FFA membership was 2.48 years ($SD = 1.29$). The average age of participants was 15.88 ($SD = 1.05$). When asked about what grade in school participants had just completed, the average was 9.90 ($SD = 1.00$).

Table 1
 Characteristics of Students Who Attended the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference
 (n = 288)

Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Female	163	56.2		
Male	125	43.1		
Not Reported	2	0.7		
Ethnicity				
White	270	93.1		
African American	5	1.7		
Other	4	1.4		
Native American	3	1.0		
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	0.7		
Hispanic	2	0.7		
Not Reported	4	1.4		
Membership (years)			2.48	1.29
Age			15.88	1.05
Grade (completed)			9.90	1.00

Objective two sought to describe YLLSD of 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference participants (see Table 2). Participants perceived their level of leadership as slight ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.274$). The most favorable perceived life skills were, respect others ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.67$) and have good manners ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.67$), both moderate; and get along with others ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.72$), slight. The least favorably perceived were have a positive self-concept ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 0.80$), trust other people ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.94$), and can express feelings ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 0.92$).

Table 2
*Perceived Youth Leadership Life Skills of 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference Participants
 (n = 290)*

Youth Leadership Life Skills	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Respect Others	2.51	0.67
Have Good Manners	2.50	0.67
Get Along With Others ^a	2.45	0.71
Have a Friendly Personality ^b	2.43	0.72
Can be Honest With Others ^a	2.35	0.74
Show a Responsible Attitude ^b	2.22	0.72
Consider the Needs of Others	2.19	0.72
Consider Input From all Group Members ^b	2.18	0.73
Can Listen Effectively ^b	2.17	0.79
Use Rational Thinking ^a	2.16	0.77
Can Use Information to Solve Problems	2.14	0.75
Can Set Priorities ^a	2.12	0.74
Can Clarify my Values	2.12	0.75
Can Solve Problems	2.10	0.80
Create an Atmosphere of Acceptance ^a	2.08	0.81
Am Open Minded	2.07	0.85
Can Set Goals ^a	2.06	0.79
Am Open to Change	2.05	0.86
Can Consider Alternatives ^a	2.03	0.74

Table 2 Continued

Youth Leadership Life Skills	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Can Delegate Responsibility	2.03	0.77
Can be Flexible	2.02	0.76
Can Handle Mistakes ^a	1.96	0.81
Can Determine Needs	1.92	0.67
Can Select Alternatives	1.87	0.68
Have a Positive Self-Concept	1.84	0.80
Trust Other People	1.79	0.94
Can Express Feelings	1.78	0.92
Total ^c	2.13	0.37

Note. ^a(*n*=289), ^b(*n* = 288), ^c(*n* = 278), Scale was 1 = No, 2 = Slight, 3 = Moderate, 4 = A Lot.

Objective three sought to describe leadership participation of FFA members who attended the Arkansas Leadership Conference (see Table 3). When asked about attending the Arkansas State FFA Convention (*n* = 290), 204 (70.3%) said they have attended. Of those who have attended, 25 (8.6%) have served as a Courtesy Corp member, 17 (5.9%) have been on the Nominating Committee, and 10 (3.4%) have been on the Audit Committee. When asked about attending the National FFA Convention, 112 (38.6%) said they have attended. Only 8 (2.8%) have served as a national delegate. Arkansas provides opportunities for members to attend four conferences throughout the year: Arkansas Leadership Conference, 360° Leadership Conference, Advanced Leadership Development (ALD) Conference, and the Washington Leadership Conference (WLC). The 360° Leadership Conference and Advanced Leadership Development Conference are conferences put on by the National FFA Organization and states can choose to host them if they wish. For the Arkansas Leadership Conference, 104 (35.9%) said they had participated in the conference previously. Arkansas has hosted the 360° Leadership Conference with 80 (27.6%) participating and the ALD Conference with 46 (15.9%) participating. For the WLC, 25 (8.6%) have participated.

When asked about chapter officer positions, Other (i.e. FFA representative, Junior Advisor) had the highest number with 59 (20.3%) followed by Reporter (*n* = 55, 19.0%), and Sentinel (*n* = 43, 14.8%). Members can hold more than one degree and the researchers asked the participants of the survey to only indicate the highest degree held. The highest degree held was the Chapter degree (*n* = 110, 37.9%), meaning these students also held the Greenhand and, if recognized by their chapter, the Discovery degree as well. The Greenhand degree followed the Chapter degree as the highest degree members have been awarded (*n* = 101, 34.8%). Forty (13.8%) participants reported they did not hold a degree.

Table 3

Summary of Participation in Leadership Opportunities (n = 290)

Activity	<i>f</i>	%
Conference Participation		
Arkansas State FFA Convention	204	70.3
Courtesy Corp	25	8.6
Nominating Committee	17	5.9
Audit Committee	10	3.4
National FFA Convention	112	38.6
National Convention Delegate	8	2.8
Greenhand Conference	109	37.6
Arkansas Leadership Conference	104	35.9
360° Leadership Conference	80	27.6
Advanced Leadership Development (ALD) Conference	46	15.9
Washington Leadership Conference (WLC)	25	8.6
Chapter Office Held		
President	41	14.1
Vice-President	40	13.8
Secretary	44	15.2
Treasurer	42	14.5
Reporter	55	19.0
Sentinel	43	14.8
Other	59	20.3
Highest Degree Held		
Discovery	8	2.8

Table 3 Continued

Activity	<i>f</i>	%
State	31	10.7
American	0	0.0
No Degree	40	13.8

The researchers also included SAE projects in leadership (see Table 4 and 5). There were 226 (77.9%) participants who reported having a SAE project. Most had a SAE project in the area of entrepreneurship ($n = 150$, 51.7%) followed by placement ($n = 85$, 29.3%), exploratory ($n = 24$, 8.3%), and research and experimentation ($n = 11$, 3.8%).

Table 4

Student's Involvement in Supervised Agricultural Experience Projects ($n = 290$)

SAE Project	<i>F</i>	%
Have	226	77.9
Do Not Have	64	22.1

Table 5

Students' Involvement in Supervised Agricultural Experience Project Areas ($n = 290$)

SAE Project Area	<i>f</i>	%
Entrepreneurship	150	51.7
Placement	85	29.3
Exploratory	24	8.3
Research and Experimentation	11	3.8

Note. Students could select multiple answers.

Objective four sought to describe CDE participation of FFA members who attended the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference (see Table 6). Arkansas offers 23 CDEs for FFA members to participate in, either individually or as a team. For individual CDE participation, Creed

Speaking had the highest participation (District – 20, 6.9%; State – 5, 1.7%; National – 1, 0.3%). For team CDE participation, Opening & Closing Ceremonies had the highest participation (District – $n = 56$, 19.3%; State – $n = 25$, 8.6%; National – $n = 1$, 0.3%) followed by Livestock Evaluation (District – $n = 46$, 14.8%; State – $n = 23$, 7.9%; National – $n = 2$, 0.7%) and Parliamentary Procedures (District – $n = 32$, 11.0%; State – $n = 13$, 4.5%; National – $n = 3$, 1.0%). Of those who had participated in a CDE, the level of highest participation reported was district.

Table 6

Students' Participation in Career Development Events ($n = 290$)

Event	<u>District</u>		<u>State</u>		<u>National</u>	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Individual Competition						
Creed Speaking	20	6.9	5	1.7	1	0.3
Prepared Public Speaking	6	2.1	3	1.0	0	0.0
Extemporaneous Public Speaking	4	1.4	3	1.0	0	0.0
Agriscience Fair			5	1.7	4	1.4
Team Competition						
Opening & Closing Ceremonies	56	19.3	25	8.6	1	0.3
Livestock Evaluation	46	14.8	23	7.9	2	0.7
Parliamentary Procedures	32	11.0	13	4.5	3	1.0
Poultry Evaluation	23	7.1	24	7.4	1	0.3

Table 6 Continued

Event	<u>District</u>		<u>State</u>		<u>National</u>	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Milk Quality & Products	15	5.2	15	5.2	2	0.7
Floriculture	22	7.6	6	2.1	2	0.7
Horse Evaluation			28	9.7	0	0.0
Land Judging	11	3.8	11	3.8	1	0.3
Nursery & Landscape	9	3.1	13	4.5	0	0.0
Forestry	10	3.4	9	3.1	1	0.3
Ag Mechanics	6	2.1	9	3.1	0	0.0
Farm Business Management	4	1.4	10	3.4	0	0.0
Agronomy	10	3.4	2	0.7	1	0.3
Electricity	9	3.1	4	1.4	0	0.0
Ag Communications			6	2.1	4	1.4
Meats Evaluation & Technology			10	3.4	0	0.0
Food Science & Technology			4	2.4	0	0.0
Agriscience Fair			1	0.7	2	0.7
Ag Issues Forum			1	0.3	0	0.0

Note. Students could select multiple answers.

Objectives five and six sought to explore relationships between FFA participants and FFA participation with YLLSD (see Table 7). There are negligible relationships between age, gender and years of membership with YLLSD. While the relationships between involvement and YLLSD are low, there is a stronger relationship found between CDE involvement and YLLSD.

Table 7

Relationships Between FFA Participation and FFA Involvement with YLLSD (n = 288)

Variable	YLLSD
Years of Membership ^a	0.04
Gender	-0.08
Age	0.08
Leadership Involvement ^b	0.12
CDE Involvement	0.17

Note. ^a(n = 283), ^b(n = 289)

Conclusions and Implications

Just over half of the participants in this study were female (56.2%) and most (93.1%) were Caucasian. On average, the participants had been a member of FFA for 2.48 years, were 15.88 years old, and had just completed the 9th or 10th grade. This is similar to what Ricketts et al. (2007) found when determining the practices of Georgia FFA members who attended the Success Conference. In their study, participants were over 16 years old, and half were male and half were female.

When it comes to leadership participation, participants are fairly active in the Arkansas FFA Convention with 70.3% indicating they had participated, but only 38.6% had participated in the National FFA Convention. Furthermore, 35.9% of participants had previously attended the Arkansas Leadership Conference, 27.6% have attended the ALD Conference and only 8.6% have attended the WLC. Low participation in these conferences and the National FFA Convention could be due to the fact that most were younger members or had been members for a short period of time, thus may not have had the opportunity to attend the conferences or the National FFA Convention.

When discussing leadership positions held, it is interesting to find that the highest percentage (20.3%) have held an officer position other than the six typical officer positions for FFA. Examples included Junior Advisor, Class Representative, and FFA Representative. Also, the highest degree reported was the Chapter degree (37.9%). This could be due to the young age of study participants.

In addition, the agricultural education model is a three-circle integrated model, 77.9% of participants reported having an SAE which is one component of the integrated model. Of the project areas, entrepreneurship had the most responses with 51.7% followed by placement (29.3%). This slightly differs from what Wilson and Moore (2007) found when they asked agricultural educators who attended the North Carolina summer teacher conference about SAE programs. They found teachers to believe SAE is important in agricultural education and the most common type of SAE students participated in was placement, closely followed by

entrepreneurship. Also, they found that less than 1/3 of teachers had 75% or higher of students participating in SAEs.

Arkansas FFA members participate at all levels of competition with three CDE events being the most popular: Opening & Closing Ceremonies ($n = 82$, 28.2%), Livestock Evaluation ($n = 71$, 23.4%) and Parliamentary Procedures ($n = 48$, 16.5%). The highest level of participation was the district level. This follows suite with Talbert and Balschweid (2004) finding the highest level of CDE participation to also be the district level.

There was no relationship found between age, gender and years of FFA membership with YLLSD. This differs from Dormody & Seevers (1994), Real & Harlin (2006), and Seevers & Dormody's (1994) findings of females having higher scores than males. However it does follow suit with Dormody & Seevers (1994), Seevers & Dormody (1994), and Wigenbach & Kahler's (1997) findings that there is no difference in age and YLLSD. Furthermore, there were low relationships found between FFA involvement and YLLSD. CDE involvement, however, did have a stronger relationship with YLLSD than leadership involvement. Therefore, FFA members in Arkansas should continue competing in CDEs to help increase YLLSD.

Recommendations

The National FFA Organization's motto "is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education" (National FFA Organization, 2012d, para. 1). In order for Arkansas FFA to aid in the development of personal growth, understanding which YLLS are developed in Arkansas FFA members at Arkansas FFA conferences and workshops is imperative.

The researchers found that students reported having slight or no gains in all YLLS. The researchers recommend that the Arkansas FFA Staff review the YLLS they believe students should gain from attending conferences to aid in planning future conferences if increasing YLLSD is a goal of future conferences. Furthermore, the researchers recommend administering the survey instrument at the 360° and Greenhand conferences and comparing the results from the conferences since the two conferences target different age groups that have different levels of FFA experience. This will aid the Arkansas FFA Staff in creating a more complete picture of the perceived YLLS of Arkansas FFA members. This instrument could also be administered to students who attend workshops at the Arkansas FFA Convention.

The researchers recognize that YLLS development was not the basis for the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference curriculum development, but the perceived life skills of current participants helps identify areas for future curriculum emphasis, specifically the ability to trust others, having a positive self-concept, and expressing feelings as these were the lowest rated perceived YLLS among 2012 participants.

Researchers should explore if particular leadership conferences have an impact on YLLSD scores and report the findings to state FFA staff. It is also important that workshop developers have access to information regarding the specific demographics and leadership involvement of previous participants to develop relevant curriculum for the audience.

Likewise, it is essential to understand if age is a factor to leadership life skill development at other conferences hosted by the Arkansas FFA Association. Such information would help determine if the curriculum FFA members receive is best for all age or membership levels, or if FFA members should be stratified by age.

References

- Allen, J., Ricketts, J. C., & Priest, K. (2007). Contributions of pre-collegiate and collegiate leadership experiences to alumni leadership development. *NACTA Journal*, 51(3), 56-61.
- Andenoro, A. C., Allen, S. J., Haber-Curran, P., Jenkins, D. M., Sowcik, M., Dugan, J. P., & Osteen, L. (2013). *National Leadership Education research agenda 2013-2018: Providing strategic direction for the field of leadership education*. Retrieved from: <http://www.leadershipeducators.org/Resources/Documents/NLERResearchAgenda.3.pdf>
- Arkansas FFA Association. (2012a). *2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference Report*. Hot Springs, AR: Chris Bacchus.
- Arkansas FFA Association. (2012b). *Activities & Conferences*. Retrieved from <http://arkansasffa.org/page.aspx?ID=73>
- Arkansas FFA Association. (2012c). *Brief History*. Retrieved from <http://arkansasffa.org/couchdale.aspx>
- Arkansas FFA Association. (2012d). *Camp Couchdale Clean Up*. Retrieved from <http://arkansasffa.org/page.aspx?ID=76>
- Boyd, B. L., Herring, D. R., & Briers, G. E. (1992). Developing life skills in youth. *Journal of Extension*. 30(4).
- Connors, J. J., Falk, J. M., & Epps, R. B. (2010). Recounting the legacy: The history and use of FFA camps for leadership and recreation. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 51(1), 32-42.
- Davis, J. A. (1971). *Elementary Survey Analysis*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Doerfert, D. L. (Ed.) (2011). *National research agenda: American Association for Agricultural Education's research priority areas for 2011-2015*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University, Department of Agricultural Education and Communications.
- Dormody, T. J. & SeEVERS, B. S. (1994). Predicting youth leadership life skills development among FFA members in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. *Journal of Agricultural Education*. 35(2), 65-71. doi: 10.5032/jae.1994.02065
- Miller, R. A. (1976). *Leader/agent's guide: Leadership life skills*. Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.
- National FFA Organization. (2012a). *Agricultural Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.ffa.org/about/whowere/Pages/AgriculturalEducation.aspx>

- National FFA Organization. (2012b). *FFA statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.ffa.org/About/WhoWeAre/Pages/Statistics.aspx>
- National FFA Organization. (2012c). *Historical timeline of FFA*. Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/documents/about_ffatimeline.pdf
- National FFA Organization. (2012d). *Mission and Motto*. Retrieved from <https://www.ffa.org/About/WhoWeAre/Pages/MissionandMotto.aspx#>
- Park, T. D., & Dyer, J. E. (2005). Contributions of agricultural education, FFA, and 4-H to student leadership in agricultural colleges. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 46(2), 83-95.
- Real, L. A. & Harlin, J. F. (2006). Development of youth leadership life skills of Texas youth as San Antonio livestock exposition school tour guides. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 5(1), 39-53.
- Ricketts, S. C. & Newcomb, L. H. (1984). Leadership and personal development abilities possessed by high school seniors who are members in superior and non-superior FFA chapters, and by seniors who were never enrolled in vocational agriculture. *Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*, 25(2), 51-59.
- Ricketts, J. C., Priest, K., & Lastly, B. (2007). Student leadership practices of Georgia FFA success conference participants. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 6(1), 158-173.
- Rutherford, T. A., Townsend, C. D., Briers, G. E., Cummins, R., & Conrad, C. R. (2002). Leadership self-perceptions of WLC participants. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 43(2), 22-33.
- Seevers, B. & Dormody, T. J. (1994). Predicting youth life leadership skills development among senior 4-H members: A tri-state study. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 35(3), 64-69. doi: 10.5032/jae.1994.03064
- Seevers, B. S., Dormody, T. J., & Clason, D. L. (1995). Developing a scale to research and evaluate youth leadership life skills development. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 36(2), 28-34.
- Shinn, G. C., Briers, G. E., Christiansen, J. E., Edwards, M. C., Harlin, J. F., Lawver, D. E., Lindner, J. R., Murphy, T. H., & Parr, B.A. (2003). *Improving student achievement in mathematics: An important role for secondary agricultural education in the 21st Century*. Unpublished manuscript. Texas A&M University. College Station, TX
- Smith, A. R., Garton, B. L., & Kitchel, T. J. (2010). Beyond mere enrollment: Level of youth organization participation as a predictor of collegiate academic success and retention. *Journal of Agricultural Education* 51(2), 24-35.
- Smith, R. B. (1933). Arkansas F.F.A camp and its functions. *Agricultural Education*, 6(3), 46-47.

- Staller, B. (2001, February/March) What in the world does integral mean anyway? Is FFA optional? *NAAE News & Views*, XLIII (3), 1.
- Talbert, B. A., & Balschweid, M. A. (2004). Engaging students in the agricultural education model: Factors affecting student participation in the National FFA Organization. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 45(1), 29-41.
- Townsend, C. D. & Carter, R. I. (1983). The relationship of participation in FFA activities and leadership, citizenship, and cooperation. *Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*. 24(1), 20-25. doi: 10.5032/jaatea.1983.01020
- Wingenbach, G. J. & Kahler, A. A. (1997). Self-perceived youth leadership and life skills of Iowa FFA members. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 38(3), 18-27.

Author Biographies

Chelsey Ann Ahrens recently received her doctorate from Texas Tech University in agricultural communications and education. While at Texas Tech, Ahrens taught agricultural communications courses. Ahrens holds a M.S. degree in agricultural leadership from the University of Georgia and a B.S. in Animal Science from the University of Arkansas.

Cassandra K. Cox, an instructor in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology, provides instruction for agricultural communications and leadership courses. Cox is a Leadership Education Institute Fellow and has a B.S. and M.S. from the University of Arkansas.

Scott Burris is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications at Texas Tech University. He teaches courses in agricultural education at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Burris holds a Ph.D. and M.S. degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Missouri and a B.S. degree in Agricultural Education from Texas Tech University.

Mollie Dykes is a graduate of the University of Arkansas with a B.S. in agricultural communications and a minor in agricultural education. She is currently employed by Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation as the Senior Public Relations Assistant.